

eBook Collections for High Schools

by LURA D. SANBORN

EBOOK COLLECTIONS CAN exponentially increase a school library's collection for pennies on the dollar when compared to the cost of an identical print collection. These online collections have the advantage of accessibility by multiple simultaneous users and remote access from any location with an Internet connection. eBook collections, therefore, offer inexpensive collection growth with greater accessibility.

This article focuses on eBook collections that, if in print, would be placed in circulating collections. The criteria for inclusion is as follows: the product must cost around \$5,000 or less; the product must offer a collection (not just title-by-title acquisition); the collection must be readable on a Web browser and must not be linked to proprietary software; and, finally, the collection must also include free MARC records that are downloadable into a library's ILS system.

These items are highlighted in each of the following collections: ownership or lease, number of titles, simultaneous or single user access, collection coverage, Patron Driven Acquisition (PDA) model availability and pricing, when available.

Pricing specific to the high school market was obtained whenever possible. As always, pricing is subject to change, and vendors should be contacted for up-to-the minute pricing.

ACLS HUMANITIES EBOOKS

ACLS Humanities eBooks are available direct from the vendor and the Lyris consortium. This annual subscription product, listed at \$450, offers unlimited concurrent users. ACLS currently contains over 2,800 titles with another 500+ expected to be added in summer 2011. Titles are humanities focused including history, religion, art, science history, and literature. Titles are largely contemporary, published within the last fifteen years, but the collection also includes work originally published as far back as the 1800s. The basic search box uses string matching that means it defaults to a phrase search. This is an absolute best buy.

NETLIBRARY

Netlibrary, owned by EBSCO and recently purchased from OCLC, offers title-by-title eBook selection, prepackaged subject sets, and a Patron Driven Acquisition model. All products

offer permanent ownership. Titles are available to view one user at a time.

Librarians may use the NetLibrary TitleSelect tool to hand-select individual titles. EBSCO can assess a library's existing eBook collection and then create and suggest a custom eBook collection. Patron Driven Acquisition is also available. The PDA model allows users to browse a library-defined collection of titles, and titles are then purchased after being viewed by a user.

A variety of eBook subject sets are also available for purchase. Subject sets are updated annually with zero duplication from year to year. Subject sets vary in size (some as small as eight volumes; others nearer fifty) and price (\$1,000 to \$5,000).

Annual, permanent ownership collections are also available via the Lyris consortium. These collections have been created with community colleges and academic institutions in mind, though many/most titles seem appropriate to the high school researcher. Collections typically include 3,000+ titles comprising an impressive array of academic titles, general interest, study guides, and some reference material. The 10th collection opened to new participants February 2011 through August 2011. If past patterns follow, an 11th collection can be expected in late winter 2012. Pricing is based on enrollment, and for the 10th collection, ranged from \$1,000 to \$1.45 per FTE. Unfortunately, past collections are not available to purchase.

EBRARY

ebrary announced in January 2011 that it has become part of the Proquest family. In addition to the annual subscription collections offered below, ebrary offers a Patron Driven Acquisition model. Short-term loans were announced in spring 2011, as either a complement to the PDA model or as a stand-alone service. Packages include unlimited simultaneous multi-user access.

The ebrary School Edition lists for \$2,500. It contains over 7,000 titles comprising academic, general interest, foreign language learning, reference, study guides, and a light amount of fiction and poetry. This is an impressive collection of titles mainly published within the last ten years.

The ebrary Academic Complete collection lists for \$5,400 and boast 50,000+ titles. This collection is appropriate for both high school and academic libraries and includes major academic presses. Academic, general interest, foreign language learning, reference, fiction, and study guides are all included. Although a touch outside the stated evaluative criteria of \$5,000 or less, given the supreme quality and depth of this collection, it seemed important to mention. Also, discounts are available for libraries that purchase in groups or with a consortium.

Additionally, ebrary has recently launched a project entitled "Public Library Complete" for which schools can receive free access when this 21,000+ volume collection is purchased by the town library. Librarians can contact the vendor for more details.

ELECTRONIC BOOK LIBRARY

Interestingly, this was the collection decided upon by Cushing Academy, the high school library that famously decided to go digital in 2009. The EBL offers a very unique model involving access to its entire collection, with a pay-as-you-use feature.

The Patron Driven Acquisition collection of 150,000+ volumes can be combined with librarian-selected, title-by-title acquisitions. Purchased titles are permanently retained by the library with simultaneous multi-user access.

The PDA model allows for short-term loans (with a fee per short-term loan, typically 5% or 10% of list price), instead of the more standard "you view you buy" model. A short-term loan begins after a patron browses the item for five minutes; fewer minutes than that and the library is not charged. The library can then purchase a given text after that text has hit a certain number (determined by the library) of short-term loans. The system can purchase this title automatically for the library or librarian approval can be required.

There is a one-time set-up fee ranging from \$2,000 to \$4,000. eBook prices are similar to cloth prices.

OVERDRIVE

Formerly known for its audio book platform, Overdrive is also in the eBook market and now offers music and video as well. Although Overdrive does not offer a prepackaged collection, the popularity of the service amongst public libraries warranted its mention.

Overdrive offers the school librarian the ability to create a collection from over 300,000 titles. Depending on publisher permission, titles may be viewed by one user at a time or by multi-users. The 300,000 title selection pool includes popular titles, academic works, study guides, foreign language learning, and classics. There is an annual fee, ranging from \$2,000 to \$50,000, depending upon a school's enrollment. Half of the fee is then considered a collection credit and can be applied to Overdrive titles.

FREE SOURCES

In addition to the ubiquitous Google Books, other high-quality options exist for public domain titles including Hathi Trust, Project Gutenberg, Open Library, and Internet Archive, and for audio librivox.org. Not yet available is a tool indexing inclusively these free collections.

UPCOMING SOURCES

It has been announced that Project Muse will be launching an eBook collection in 2012. If it is anything like its journal product, the collection should be affordable and of high quality. Similarly, JSTOR has announced its own eBook package, also expected to launch in 2012. Again, if high-school market pricing continues, and the package is of the quality and depth of its JSTOR journal collections, this should be a star in the eBook market.

PREDICTIONS

Just like the digitization of periodicals eventually reached some expected standards, it seems likely eBooks will too. In the meantime, some differences in formatting, purchasing, and searching must be accepted until a more universal standard is applied.

MY EXPERIENCES AND VERDICT

The right eBook collection(s) can exponentially increase a school library's collection for pennies on the dollar when compared to an identical print collection. This past fall, my school library purchased/leased three eBook collections (ACLS, Netlibrary 9, and ebrary's School Edition). In print, this would have taken 6.5 years of budget to accumulate. (This is without factoring the staffing time associated with acquiring and processing such a large number of printed titles.) In lean and thoughtful times, an eBook collection can nudge libraries ever further into relevancy. A quick cost analysis reveals the appeal. School libraries have historically received special, highly-discounted and highly-favorable pricing for digital journal collections. Ideally, this model will carry over into the eBook world as well. Finally, and most importantly, are the quality and depth e-collections can offer students. In addition, many eBook collections have no turnaways, durable links, and the blessing of remote access. As we wait for a new standard, supplying an eBook collection(s) can only be of benefit to our students and often offer the library a tidy cost-saving measure as well. ◀

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